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ABSTRACT

Findings are summarized from the statewide assessment of Texas students' achievement in mathematics, reading, citizenship awareness, and writing skills. For reading and mathematics achievement, criterion-referenced tests were developed. Test items from exercises developed by the National Assessment of Educational Programs (NAEP) were used to assess achievement in citizenship and writing. Results in all four areas are analyzed according to state geographic regions, family income, ethnic background (black, Mexican American, and other), sex of student, size and type of school district, per pupil expenditure, and languages spoken at home. For reading and mathematics achievement, other home factors, including reading materials at home, television viewing habits, homework, parents' education, and educational aspirations of the students are considered. (MH)

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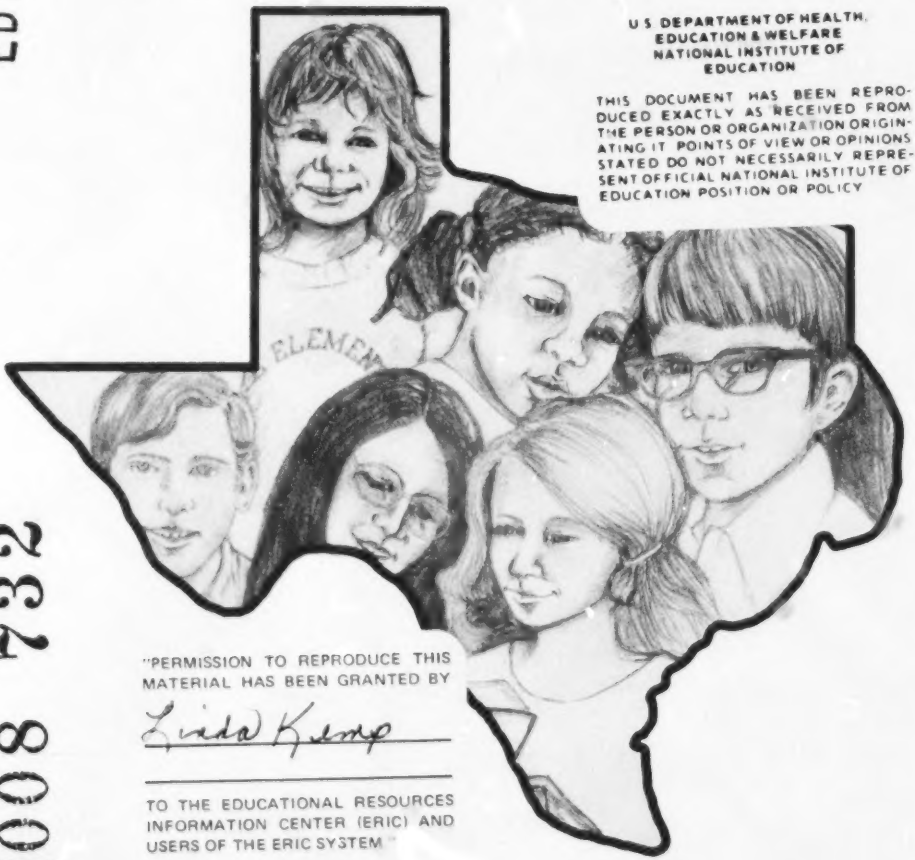
SUMMARY REPORT

TEXAS ASSESSMENT PROJECT

ED169133



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TEXAS ASSESSMENT PROJECT
Texas Education Agency, Austin, 1978

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

COMPLIANCE WITH TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; TITLE IX OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972; AND THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) non-discrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) non-discriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex;

(6) non-discriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and/or Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

FOREWORD

The State Board of Education has a long-standing interest in finding out how well Texas students are achieving the basic competencies necessary to function as adults in our society. The Sixty-fifth Texas Legislature expressed its interest in better information for educational planning and improvement, and provided resources to be used for this purpose. To carry out this directive, the Texas Education Agency has conducted a statewide assessment of student achievement in four basic student goal areas.

We are both gratified and grateful for the positive response we received from local school officials in carrying out this assessment. Every one of more than 2,200 school campuses requested to participate in the study agreed to do so, and their cheerful cooperation throughout the effort was of inestimable value to the success of the project. We take this as a sign that the local school districts of Texas share a keen professional interest in being accountable, both in terms of recognizing their successes and of taking appropriate actions to strengthen their programs where weaknesses are identified.

The findings in these reports provide important information about where Texas students are achieving well and where they are experiencing learning problems. But assessment is only the first step toward improvement. The rest of the task consists of finding the problems within and outside the school that underlie low student achievement, adapting or inventing more effective instructional practices to overcome these problems, marshalling the support and commitment of parents and communities in understanding and joining with educators in solving these problems, providing the resources necessary to bring about planned change, and putting these improved instructional practices into effect.

We at the Texas Education Agency call upon local school districts, teacher education institutions, regional education service centers, professional organizations, the Texas Legislature, and the citizens of Texas to join us in using this information to bring about improvements in learning opportunities for Texas students. It is only through concerted efforts of the entire educational community that we can continue to move toward excellence and provide the finest possible educational programs for the children and youth of Texas.

M. L. Brockette
Commissioner of Education

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BACKGROUND

The State Board of Education established in 1970 a set of Goals for Public School Education in Texas to:

- set forth the knowledge, skills, and competencies students in Texas should acquire in public school and
- establish an effective system of accountability that will tell educators and the public whether students are making progress toward those goals.

The State Board is responsible under Texas law for assessing the educational needs of the state and for initiating appropriate actions to improve student achievement where it is found to be less than satisfactory. In line with this responsibility, the Board has for the past several years requested that the Texas Legislature provide resources to support reliable statewide assessment of student achievement. The Sixty-fifth Legislature responded to this request with Senate Concurrent Resolutions 29 and 30 and with Senate Bill 1. In these three measures, the legislature called for improved information for state and local educational planning, for periodic assessment of the progress Texas students are making, and for corrective measures to raise the performance of low achievers.

To carry out these mandates, the State Board initiated the Texas Assessment Project to determine how well Texas students are achieving in the areas of reading, mathematics, writing, and citizenship.

In April and May of 1978, tests were administered to a scientifically drawn random sample of approximately 94,000 students by trained test administrators under a contract with Research Triangle Institute. Tests in reading and mathematics were administered to sixth and eleventh grade students; tests of writing and citizenship were administered to 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old students.

The sample was statistically representative of the age/grade levels tested for the state as a whole and for each of the 20 geographic regions of the state served by the regional education service centers. Since the sample is not representative of any local school district, school campus, or classroom, the findings of this assessment cannot be used to make judgments about the performance of any individual district, school, teacher, or student.

The findings reported here are based on a single measurement taken in 1978, and do not purport to show longitudinal comparisons. To measure change in the achievement of students, performance data must be gathered over a period of time.

The results of the assessment of reading and mathematics were reported to the State Board in October 1978, and the findings in the areas of writing and citizenship achievement were reported in November 1978. The major findings of the Texas Assessment Project are summarized in this report.

Results of the Texas Assessment Project have been published in five reports:

- Reading — Texas Assessment of Essential Objectives
- Mathematics — Texas Assessment of Essential Objectives
- Achievement in Reading and Mathematics — Sixth Grade
- Writing — A Statewide Assessment in Texas
- Citizenship — A Statewide Assessment in Texas

ACHIEVEMENT IN READING AND MATHEMATICS

METHODS OF MEASUREMENT

Tests of reading and mathematics were given to students in grades six and eleven. Two different approaches were used to measure achievement in reading and mathematics. Criterion-referenced tests were used to provide a profile of the basic competencies which students have mastered and those on which they are having problems. The criterion-referenced tests were developed by the Texas Education Agency and local school districts to determine the progress students are making toward mastering the essential reading and mathematics objectives established for Texas. A nationally standardized norm-referenced test, the California Achievement Test, 1977, was used to obtain general estimates of student achievement in these areas and to compare the achievement of Texas students with that of students in the nation. These two types of measurement instruments provide broader and more reliable information about student performance than either type of test used separately.

STATEWIDE RESULTS IN READING

Criterion-Referenced Test Results

Special tests based on essential reading objectives developed for Texas students were administered at the sixth and eleventh grades. Figures 1 and 2 show the percentages of Texas sixth and eleventh graders who have mastered each of the mid-point level and exit level essential reading objectives. Statewide achievement is considered adequate for objectives mastered by 90 percent or more of the students (Level I). Objectives mastered by 75 to 89 percent of students indicate less than adequate performance but not necessarily a deficiency of high priority in the state (Level II). Student performance is considered to be critically deficient for objectives mastered by fewer than 75 percent of the students (Level III).

PERCENT OF SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS MASTERING ESSENTIAL READING OBJECTIVES

STATEWIDE RESULTS BY PERFORMANCE LEVELS

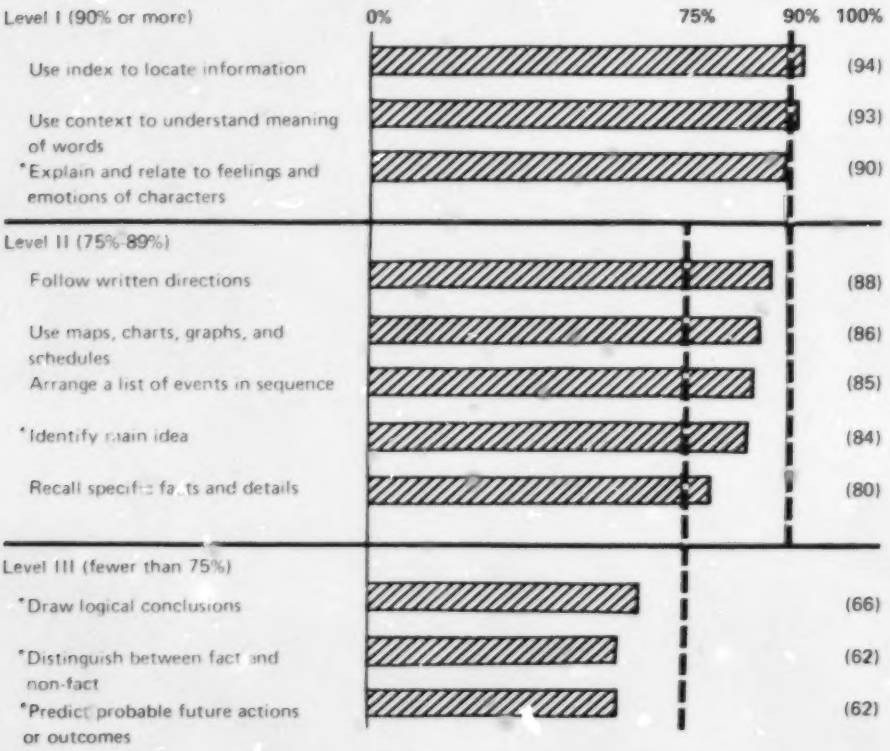

FIGURE 1

***These objectives were judged by the Texas Education Agency staff to involve the higher order cognitive skills of decision making or problem-solving.**

PERCENT OF ELEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS MASTERING ESSENTIAL READING OBJECTIVES

STATEWIDE RESULTS BY PERFORMANCE LEVELS

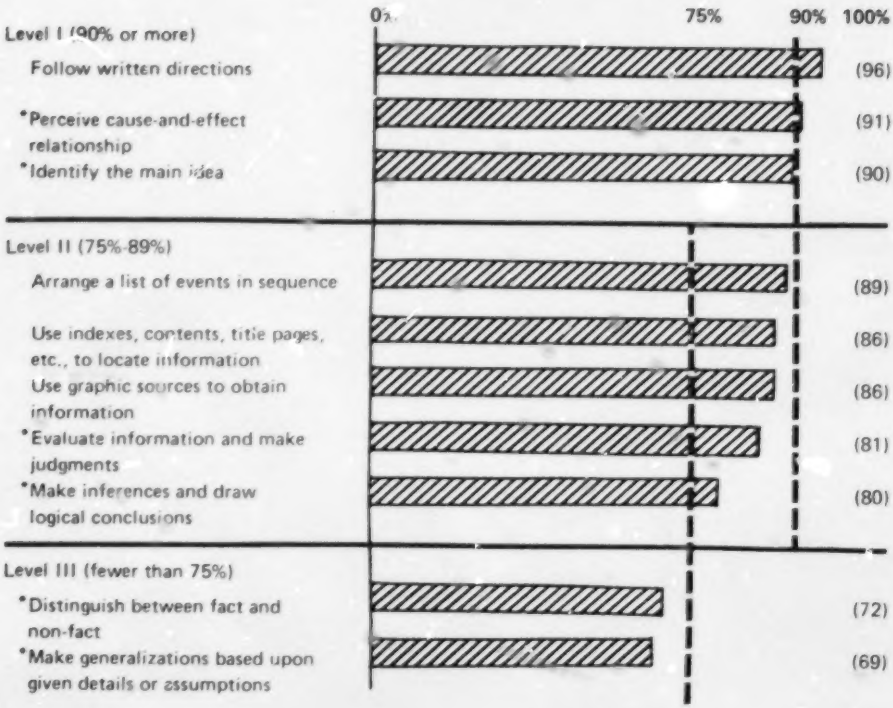

FIGURE 2

*These objectives were judged by the Texas Education Agency staff to involve the higher order cognitive skills of decision making or problem-solving.

Forty-three percent of eleventh graders mastered all of the exit level reading objectives tested. Thirty-three percent of sixth graders mastered all of the mid-point objectives measured by the test.

Norm-Referenced Test Results

A standardized reading achievement test was administered at the sixth grade. Texas sixth grade students performed better on the norm-referenced reading vocabulary test than they did on the norm-referenced test of reading comprehension. On each test, the average score of Texas students was below the national norm, the 50th percentile.

TABLE I

NORM-REFERENCED TEST RESULTS IN READING:
Percentile Ranks of Texas Sixth Graders

(National Average = 50 %ile)

READING		
Vocabulary	Comprehension	Total Reading
47 %ile	44 %ile	45 %ile

STATE RESULTS IN MATHEMATICS

Criterion-Referenced Test Results

Special tests based on essential mathematics objectives developed for Texas students were administered at the sixth and eleventh grades. Figures 3 and 4 show the percentages of Texas sixth and eleventh graders who demonstrated mastery of mid-point level and exit level essential mathematics objectives measured by the tests. Statewide achievement in mathematics is considered adequate for objectives mastered by 90 percent of more of the students (Level I). Objectives mastered by 75 to 89 percent of students indicate less than adequate performance but not necessarily a deficiency of high priority in the state (Level II). Student performance is considered to be critically deficient for objectives mastered by fewer than 75 percent of the students (Level III).

PERCENT OF SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS MASTERING ESSENTIAL MATHEMATICS OBJECTIVES

STATEWIDE RESULTS BY PERFORMANCE LEVELS

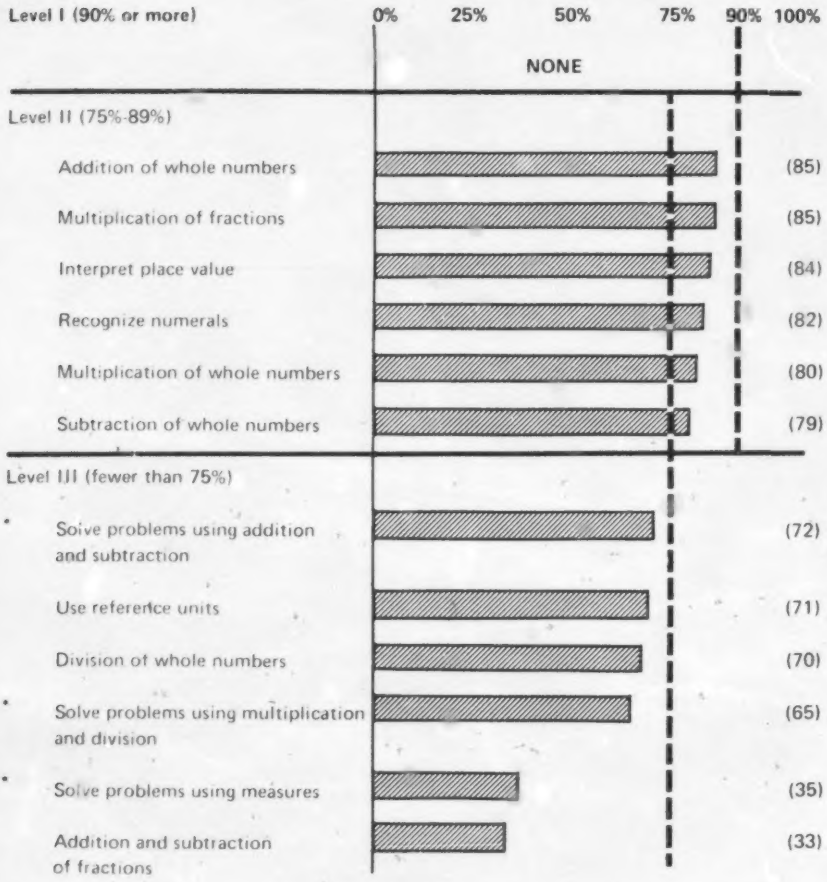

FIGURE 3

*These objectives were judged by the Texas Education Agency staff to involve the higher order cognitive skills of decision making or problem-solving.

PERCENT OF ELEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS MASTERING ESSENTIAL MATHEMATICS OBJECTIVES

STATEWIDE RESULTS BY PERFORMANCE LEVELS

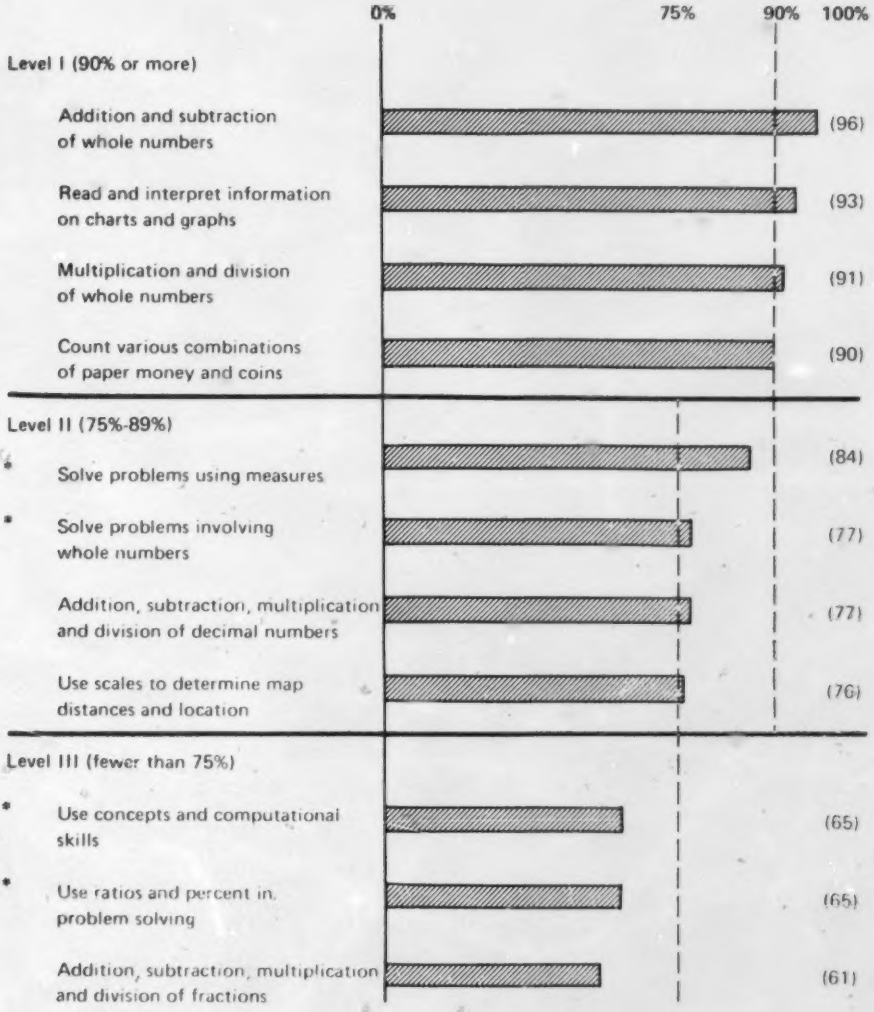

FIGURE 4

***These objectives were judged by the Texas Education Agency staff to involve the higher order cognitive skills of decision making or problem-solving.**

Thirty-two percent of eleventh graders mastered all of the exit level mathematics objectives tested. Thirteen percent of sixth graders mastered all of the mid-point objectives measured by the test.

Norm-Referenced Test Results

A standardized mathematics test was administered to a sample of sixth grade students. Texas students scored above the national average on mathematics computation, but performed below the norm on the test of mathematics concepts and applications.

TABLE II

NORM-REFERENCED TEST RESULTS IN MATHEMATICS:
Percentile Ranks of Texas Sixth Graders

National Average = 50 %ile		
Computation	Concepts and Applications	Total Mathematics
54 %ile	43 %ile	48 %ile

PERFORMANCE OF SUB-POPULATIONS IN READING AND MATHEMATICS

Test results in reading and mathematics were analyzed for students grouped according to education service center region, size and type of school district, per pupil expenditure, family income, ethnicity, and sex. Student performance was studied also in relation to reading materials available in the home, amount of television watched, time spent on homework, language spoken in the home, educational levels of parents, and educational aspirations of students.

Regional Results

Data were collected by region for use by each of the 20 regional education service centers in providing services appropriate to the needs of students in the school districts of the region.

A number of significant differences were found in the performance of students in the 20 regions on both the norm-referenced tests and criterion-referenced tests in reading and mathematics. In general, students in regions with relatively small proportions of ethnic minority students performed better than did students in regions with high proportions of ethnic minority students.

Family Income

Students from families with average or above average income performed significantly better than students from low income families in both reading and mathematics.

- On 43 of the 44 objectives measured by the criterion-referenced tests of reading and mathematics, higher percentages of sixth and eleventh graders from average or above average income families demonstrated mastery than did students from low income families.

- Students from average or above average income families as a group scored above the national average on all the norm-referenced tests of reading and mathematics; students from low income families attained average scores well below the national norms, near the lowest quartile on several of the subtests.

Ethnicity

The greatest differences in the achievement of students in both reading and mathematics were found among the three ethnic groups studied: black, Mexican American, and "other." (The "other" category consists almost entirely of white students.)

- "Other" students in grades six and eleven demonstrated high levels of mastery (90 percent of higher) of 20 of the 44 objectives measured by the criterion-referenced tests of reading and mathematics.

  Scores of "other" students in the sixth grade were above the national norms on all the norm-referenced tests of reading and mathematics. Their average score for total reading was at the 58th percentile; for total mathematics, at the 59th percentile.

- The percentages of sixth and eleventh grade Mexican American students attaining mastery of the objectives measured by the criterion-referenced tests in reading and mathematics were lower than those of "other" students on all of the 44 objectives measured.

  Average scores of Mexican American sixth graders on the norm-referenced tests of reading and mathematics were below the national norm — at the 29th and 38th percentile respectively — and below the scores of "other" students on all of the norm-referenced subtests of reading and mathematics.

- Percentages of sixth and eleventh grade black students attaining mastery on the objectives measured by the criterion-referenced tests of reading and mathematics were lower than "other" students for every objective and lower than Mexican American students for all but two of the 44 objectives tested.

  The average scores of sixth grade black students as a group were below national averages on the norm-referenced tests in both reading and mathematics — at the 28th and 30th percentiles respectively — and were lower than the average scores of Mexican American and "other" students.

Sex

- Females performed better than males on all tests of reading at both the sixth and eleventh grades.

- At the sixth grade, females performed better than males on the norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests of mathematics.

- At the eleventh grade percentages of males demonstrating mastery were higher than those of females for four of the mathematics objectives and approximately equal to females on the remaining mathematics objectives.

- Differences between performance of males and females on all reading and mathematics tests were greater at the sixth grade than at the eleventh grade.

Size and Type of School District

- Students in suburban school districts as a group performed better on both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests in reading and mathematics than students in the other four types of districts studied in the sample. Performance of students in urban districts as a group was generally the lowest.

- However, when the norm-referenced test scores were examined for each ethnic group according to type of school district, it was apparent that minority students and "other" students in urban districts were achieving about as well as, in some cases better than, their ethnic counterparts in the suburban districts.

- Students in each of the ethnic groups attending school in rural districts performed less well than their ethnic counterparts in other types of districts.

Per Pupil Expenditure

School districts were classified by amount of state and local money spent annually per student (per pupil expenditure). Since federal funds and money expended for capital outlay and for bonded indebtedness are not included, the figures do not represent the total amount most districts spent per pupil.

- Results based on these data indicate only minor differences in student performance among most the categories of per pupil expenditure.

- In the "Under $700" category, however, student performance in reading and mathematics was somewhat lower than that of students in the other four categories.

To reach any definitive conclusions about the relationship between per pupil expenditure and levels of student achievement, more information would be necessary, such as:

- all sources of funds (beyond state and local sources) to give a total picture of amounts of money being spent per pupil by a district
- distribution of funds to campuses within a district and to programs for specified student populations within a campus
- patterns of achievement within districts

Home Factors

Several additional factors were studied in relation to student performance on the reading and mathematics tests:

- Reading Materials in the Home — Students who reported availability of books, encyclopedias, newspapers, and magazines in their homes performed better in both reading and mathematics than did students who reported few or no reading materials at home.
- Television Viewing — Students who reported that they spent small or moderate amounts of time watching television performed better than students who reported watching more than four or five hours of television daily.
- Homework — Students who reported that they completed assigned homework performed better than students who reported that no homework was assigned or that they did not complete homework when it was assigned.
- Home Language — Students who reported that only English was spoken at home performed better than those reporting that another language was spoken predominantly in the home.

- Educational levels of Parents and Educational Aspirations of Students — A consistent relationship was found between higher performance of eleventh-grade students on these tests and higher levels of education of the parents and higher educational aims of the students themselves.

GENERAL FINDINGS IN READING AND MATHEMATICS

- Many Texas students demonstrated that they are making satisfactory progress in mastering essential reading and mathematics objectives.
- Student performance was better on the more concrete skills than on higher order problem-solving and decision-making competencies.
- Higher percentages of eleventh graders than sixth graders demonstrated mastery of objectives common to both tests.
- Significant numbers of students in some of the sub-populations of Texas students demonstrated low performance on the essential reading and mathematics objectives measured.

ACHIEVEMENT IN CITIZENSHIP AND WRITING

METHODS OF MEASUREMENT

Tests in citizenship and writing were administered to 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old students. The items used for measuring student achievement in citizenship and writing were selected from exercises developed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a project funded by the U.S. Office of Education. This organization has conducted two nationwide assessments in the areas of writing and citizenship in recent years. By using NAEP test items and replicating their test administration procedures, the performance of Texas students can be compared with that of students in the United States.

A total of 101 test items measured selected student knowledge and attitudes in the areas of citizenship. Some of the test items measuring writing required students to compose passages which were scored according to criteria of good writing.

Only those elements of citizenship and writing that could be measured by test items available from NAEP were covered in the assessment. These elements are not proffered as comprehensive coverage of the two areas, but should be viewed as selected, important areas of citizenship and writing. A total "score" is not provided for either citizenship or writing. The specific items constitute a partial profile of student achievement in each area.

STATEWIDE RESULTS IN CITIZENSHIP

Students in Texas were found to be achieving satisfactorily in several aspects of citizenship development:

- Texas students demonstrated a high degree of recognition of constitutional rights, positive attitudes about law in our society, and general support of equal opportunity for all citizens.

- Texas students performed slightly better than their counterparts in the nation on 22 of the 101 items included on the citizenship tests.

- On most of the 76 items that were taken by students of different age groups, older students performed better than younger students.

- From the total 101 items included on the tests, staff of the Texas Education Agency identified 25 items to be of principal importance within the curriculum. On 12 of these 25 items of principal interest, the oldest[1] Texas students who took the items performed well, that is, 85 percent or more of these students answered correctly. These 12 items covered the following facts and concepts:

  The duty of a jury is to determine guilt or innocence.

  An arrested person has the right to remain silent.

  An arrested person has the right to know what he or she is being accused of.

  An arrested person has the right to be represented by an attorney.

  Police cannot keep persons jailed while gathering evidence.

  The President cannot stop criticism from the media.

  The United States should have more than one political party.

  Unfair laws should be changed.

  Talking things over with another nation is better than fighting.

  The black male (who was pictured and described) should be able to vote.

  Women should receive the same pay as men for the same work.

  Getting a job should not depend on sex, skin color, political opinion, or religion, but should depend on abilities and skills.

[1]For items taken by two or more age groups, only the performance of the oldest age group was considered for reporting purposes.

Performance of Texas students was less than satisfactory on several aspects of citizenship development:

- Texas students did not demonstrate satisfactory performance on knowledge of the structure and functions of government or on support for the political process.

- The performance of Texas students was lower than that of their national counterparts on 32 of the total 101 items included in the citizenship tests.

- Performance of Texas students was low on two of the 25 items of principal importance, that is, fewer than 50 percent of the oldest students who took the tests gave correct responses to items measuring two concepts:

  The executive branch is responsible for carrying out laws.

  If students are fighting in the hallway, a student should look for a teacher or principal to restore order.

STATEWIDE RESULTS IN WRITING

Test exercises in writing measured student performance on specific writing tasks, mechanics of writing, and recognition of appropriate writing, and use of written communication.

Imaginative, Expressive Writing

Nine year-olds were given an exercise in expressive writing which tested their ability to reveal feelings and ideas through free expression. Forty-nine percent of 9-year-old Texans, compared to 55 percent of their counterparts in the United States, demonstrated ability to do imaginative, expressive writing.

Persuasive or Explanatory Writing

Students across the country had difficulty with explanatory and persuasive writing. Texas students performed less well than their national counterparts in these areas.

- Ten percent of Texas 9-year-olds, compared to 14 percent of students in the United States, were able to write an effective letter requesting an item.

- Seventeen percent of Texas 13-year-olds could write an effective letter describing a problem and proposing a solution, compared to 31 percent of their peers in the nation.

- Eight percent of Texas 17-year-olds were able to write a satisfactory job-application letter, compared to 18 percent of their counterparts in the United States.

Writing Mechanics

Descriptive writing for all three age groups was scored according to accepted standards of correctness in word choiced, spelling, capitalization, agreement, and punctuation. In addition, these exercises were scored according to length and kinds of words, sentences, and paragraphs used.

- Sentence Construction — Texas students in all three age groups performed similarly to their national counterparts in the construction of acceptable simple, compound, and complex sentences and in the number of errors in writing run-on sentences and unacceptable sentence fragments. Texas students wrote higher percentages of awkward sentences than did their national peers.

- Spelling — Texas students made about the same percentages of spelling errors as their counterparts in the nation. Nine-year-old Texans misspelled 10 percent of words, as compared to 3 percent of words misspelled by 17-year-old Texans.

- Grammatical Agreement — Errors in grammatical agreement (subject/verb, noun/pronoun, noun/modifier, singular/plural, and tense) made by 9- and 17-year-old students in Texas were similar in frequency to those made by students nationally, while Texas 13-year-olds made fewer agreement errors than their national peers.

- Word Choice, Capitalization, and Punctuation — Texas students performed as well as students nationally, on word choice, capitalization, and punctuation.

- Paragraphs — Students in all three age groups in the United States wrote better paragraphs than Texas students.

  - Almost three-fourths of the paragraphs written by Texas 9-year-olds were inadequate, as compared with just over half the paragraphs written by their counterparts in the United States.

  - At age 13, more than half the paragraphs written by Texas students were unsatisfactory while the proportion was less than one-fourth for students in the nation.

  - While the percentages of 13- and 17-year-olds in the nation who wrote satisfactory paragraphs were about the same, the performance of Texas 17-year-olds was over 10 percentage points better than that of Texas 13-year-olds.

  - More than half of the paragraphs written by Texas 17-year-olds were satisfactory, as compared with three-fourths of the paragraphs written by their national peers.

- Fluency — Use of longer words, sentences, paragraphs, as well as use of more compound and complex sentences, is regarded as a general measure of fluency in writing.

  - Texas students at all three age levels wrote words and sentences of about the same length as students in the nation.

  - Texas students wrote fewer sentences per paragraph than their counterparts in the nation, resulting in shorter paragraphs and essays.

  - Texas students used higher percentages of simple sentences than did their national counterparts.

Recognizing Appropriate Writing

In addition to actual writing performance, students' ability to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate writing was measured.

- Texas 13-year-olds were less able to recognize quality writing by others than were 13-year-olds in the nation.

- Texas 17-year-olds performed about as well as their national counterparts in recognizing effective writing.

Valuing Written Communication

Recognizing the importance of writing and its varied purposes is a basic step toward effective communication. Five short-answer exercises were used to assess students' attitudes toward writing. Students reported how frequently they use writing, if they write for purpose and enjoyment, and how they use writing to communicate or learn about the past.

- Most Texas students value writing as a means of communication and as a tool for learning about the past, write ideas down as an aid to remembering, and write letters to friends.

- More than twice as high a percentage of Texas 9-year-olds (71 percent) said they write stories for enjoyment as did 17-year-olds (34 percent).

PERFORMANCE OF SUB-POPULATIONS IN CITIZENSHIP AND WRITING

Test results in citizenship and writing were analyzed for students grouped according to education service center region, size and type of school district, per pupil expenditure, family income, ethnicity, sex, and language spoken in the home.

Regional Results

- In citizenship, percentages of students in the 20 regions answering correctly each of the 25 items of principal importance varied above and below the percentages of students statewide in a manner which forms no consistent pattern of high or low performance for any single region.

- For writing competencies, in most of the geographic regions there was no consistent pattern of students performing higher or lower than students statewide. However, students in regions with high percentages of ethnic minority students performed less well than did students in regions with relatively small percentages of ethnic minority students.

Family Income

- Students from low income families performed less well than students statewide on more than two-thirds of the 101 items on the citizenship tests.

- For most writing competencies measured, students who were from average or higher income families performed better than students from low income families.

Ethnicity

- Black and Mexican American students performed less well than "other" students on about two-thirds of the citizenship test items.

- Black and Mexican American students performed better than "other" students on four test items related to maintenance of an orderly school environment and to equal opportunity for all citizens.

- "Other" students performed consistently better than black and Mexican American students on specific writing tasks measured and on recognizing effective writing.

- Seventeen-year-old Mexican American students performed better than 17-year-old black students in writing effective letters and in several aspects of writing mechanics.

Sex

- Male students performed better than female students on about one-third of the 101 items on the citizenship tests.

- Females performed consistently better than males on almost all the writing tasks and skills measured.

Language Spoken in the Home

- Students from homes where a language other than English is spoken predominantly performed less well than students statewide on more than two-thirds of the 101 citizenship items. Students from homes where only English is spoken performed better than students statewide on one-fourth of the items.

- Students from homes where a language other than English is spoken predominantly performed less well in writing than students from homes where only English is spoken.

Size and Type of School District

- Students from urban and rural school districts performed less well than students in suburban districts on citizenship items.

- On exercises calling for expressive, persuasive, and explanatory writing, 9- and 13-year-old students in urban school districts and in districts with over 50,000 students performed less well than students in most other types and sizes of districts.

Per Pupil Expenditure

- On a number of test items in citizenship, performance was low among students in school districts with annual expenditures of less than $700 in state and local funds per pupil, as compared with performance of students statewide.

- With minor exceptions, no consistent patterns were found in the relationship between student achievement in writing and annual expenditure of state and local funds per pupil.

- To reach any definitive conclusions about the relationship between per pupil expenditure and levels of student achievement, more information would be necessary, such as:

  - all sources of funds (beyond state and local sources) to give a total picture of amounts of money being spent per pupil by a district

  - distribution of funds to campuses within a district and to programs for specified student populations with a campus

  - patterns of achievement within districts

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this assessment, many Texas students are performing satisfactorily in the areas of reading and mathematics. Texas students also are performing satisfactorily on some aspects of citizenship and writing achievement. There are, however, certain identifiable groups of students who have important learning deficiencies in reading and mathematics. Additionally, there are some areas in both citizenship and writing in which all students or identifiable sub-populations of students are not achieving satisfactorily.

Low performance of any of the groups of students discussed in this report cannot be attributed to any single factor in or outside the school, since many factors are in a constant state of interaction. Factors found to be associated with low achievement should be studied and recommendations formulated to bring about improvements in instruction that will increase student achievement in these areas. To be successful, appropriate actions to bring about such improvements will have to be taken by various elements of the educational community:

- Improvements planned and implemented by local school districts must be the major focus of effort to improve student achievement where it is found to be low.

- School personnel should work with parents in determining what the parents can do to encourage and help their children to learn more effectively.

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- Technical assistance provided by the 20 regional education service centers should be designed to help school districts to strengthen their instructional programs in areas where student achievement is low.

- Institutions of higher learning which prepare teachers and other educational specialists should take into account identified learning gaps found among groups of students, and improve their teacher education programs to prepare teachers and administrators to deal with these learning problems.

- Professional organizations should provide leadership for improving instructional programs.

- The Texas Education Agency should consider all feasible steps to encourage and assist school districts in addressing identified student learning needs. These may include the revision of State Board of Education policy and the redirection of Agency resources toward the solution of these problems.

- Appropriate requests should be made to the Texas Legislature to provide the resources and the flexibility necessary for school districts to plan and implement the required improvements in their instructional programs.

At both local and state levels, school boards, school administrators, and school staffs should work vigorously to inform the general public of both the successes and the problems identified in connection with student achievement. Concerned citizens should be encouraged by school officials to participate in and support constructive efforts to bring about improvements in the quality of educational opportunities for all students in Texas.